

Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project

Wetlands Managers Group Report October 17, 2002

2002-2003 Work Plan Update

At the June 6, 2002, meeting, the Board of Governors approved the Wetlands Recovery Project 2002-2003 Work Plan. This work plan included 68 acquisition, restoration, and planning projects, 20 of which were already funded and underway and 48 projects in development. This report provides an update on the progress of the Coastal Conservancy and local partners to develop, fund, implement, and complete the 68 projects on the Work Plan.

As reported at the June 2002 Board meeting, the Conservancy expended all the WRP funds available through the 2001-2002 fiscal year. In the 2002-2003 State budget, no funds were appropriated to the Coastal Conservancy specifically for the Wetlands Recovery Project. However, the Coastal Conservancy staff estimates that approximately \$8-10 million will be allocated for WRP projects from funds appropriated to the Conservancy from Proposition 40. In addition, staff anticipates providing significant funding for acquisition of properties at Ballona Wetlands and restoration at Bolsa Chica. Due to the two month delay in passing the State budget, the Coastal Conservancy was not able to begin funding any of the 48 new projects until September 2002.

Below are brief updates on all the projects on the WRP Work Plan currently being worked on by the Coastal Conservancy. Tier 1 projects are discussed first, followed by projects that are funded but not complete and Tier 2 projects which are currently being actively pursued by the Coastal Conservancy. Due to the large number of projects on the Work Plan, there are several Tier 2 projects that the Conservancy has not begun work on yet. The Conservancy will begin work on the remaining projects as quickly as possible.

Tier 1 Projects

1. **Caulerpa Taxifolia Eradication Program** – At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$1 million grant to the Agua Hedionda Lagoon Foundation (AHLF) for the Caulerpa eradication program. As discussed at the Board meeting, the grant to the AHLF would allow funds to be used for the highest priority Caulerpa eradication needs identified by the Southern California Caulerpa Action Team (SCCAT).
2. **San Luis Rey River Arundo Removal** – The Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$642,000 grant for the San Luis Rey River project at its October 31, 2002 meeting. This is a 5-year project that should be complete in June 2007.
3. **Hellman Ranch Acquisition (Los Cerritos Wetlands)** – The Wildlife Conservation Board

is leading the negotiations for acquisition of the Hellman property. Consideration and approval of the acquisition is currently scheduled for WCB's November 2002 meeting.

4. **Ballona Wetlands Area C Assessment and Conceptual Restoration Study** – The Coastal Conservancy is working with local stakeholders to identify an appropriate organization to lead the Area C Assessment.
5. **Topanga Lagoon Restoration Technical Assessments** – At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$77,000 grant to the RCD of the Santa Monica Mountains for the Topanga project. The project is expected to take one year to complete.
6. **Malibu Lagoon Habitat Enhancement Program** – At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$150,000 grant to prepare engineering and design plans for habitat enhancements in Malibu Lagoon. This grant will not include funds for the proposed project to install an inflatable weir at the lagoon. That portion of the project is still under development.
7. **Ormond Beach Acquisitions** – The Coastal Conservancy completed acquisition of 265 acres of the Ormond Beach property from Southern California Edison in June 2002. The Conservancy is continuing to negotiate for adjacent properties. This project is a very high priority for the WRP; however, because no additional acquisitions are anticipated within the next six months, the remaining acquisitions are included in the Tier 2 list.
8. **Ormond Beach Wetlands Restoration Plan** – The Coastal Conservancy will be sending out a request for proposals in October. Work on the restoration plan should begin in early 2003 and will take approximately one year to complete.
9. **Carpinteria Creek Restoration Project** – The Coastal Conservancy approved a \$70,000 grant to Community Environmental Council in September 2002 to prepare design plans and complete the environmental review and permitting for this project. It is anticipated that additional WRP funds will be provided for project implementation.

All Other Projects

10. **Goat Canyon Enhancement Project, Final Design Plans** -- The EIR/EIS for the Goat Canyon project has been finalized. Design plans and permits are in the final stage of preparation. Project construction will begin in Fall of 2003.
11. **Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program - Phase II** -- The Technical Advisory Committee is refining the scope of work for this project. Planning is expected to begin in early 2003 and will take 2 years.
12. **Tijuana River Valley Invasive Plant Control Program** -- Project planning is underway beginning with mapping of exotic species. Implementation of specific exotics removal projects should begin in early 2003.
13. **Famosa Slough Culvert Extension and Retrofit Design** – The City of San Diego is

working on the environmental review and final design plans for this project. This phase should be completed by summer 2003. Construction is estimated to cost \$40,000, and is expected to begin in late 2003.

14. **Rose Creek Enhancement Plan** – The Conservancy is working with local partners to refine the scope of work for this project. It is expected that the Coastal Conservancy will consider a grant for this project at its January 2003 meeting.
15. **Los Peñasquitos Hydrology Study** – This study is underway and should be completed in late 2003. There is approximately \$1 million in funding from Proposition 13 to implement this project.
16. **San Elijo Lagoon Non-native Plant Management** – The project should be completed by the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy by the end of 2002.
17. **San Elijo Lagoon Acquisition Program** – In September 2002, the County of San Diego completed the acquisition of the 19-acre Manchester property with funding from the County, Coastal Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The County and San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy are exploring other acquisition opportunities around the lagoon.
18. **Buena Vista Lagoon Restoration Plan** – A consultant team has been selected and restoration planning is underway. The study is expected to be complete in Fall 2003.
19. **Cottonwood Creek Park Riparian Restoration** – At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$136,250 grant to the City of Encinitas for daylighting a portion of Cottonwood Creek. The project is expected to take approximately one year to complete.
20. **Buena Vista Creek Acquisition, Sherman Parcel** – Coastal Conservancy staff is performing a more detailed analysis of the resource value of this parcel in order to make a recommendation on the proportional share of the acquisition cost that the WRP should provide. The Conservancy is also investigating the possibility of coupling this acquisition with acquisition by the County of other parcels in the vicinity.
21. **Serrano Creek Stabilization and Restoration** – Construction of the engineered portions of the Serrano Creek Stabilization and Restoration project are complete. The habitat restoration elements are underway. The project should be complete by Summer 2003.
22. **San Joaquin Marsh Enhancement - Phase II, Feasibility Study** – Preparation of the Feasibility Study is underway. Final design plans, environmental review, and permit applications should be complete by December 2003.
23. **Upper Newport Bay Ecological Restoration, Final Design Plans** – The ACOE is preparing the final design and engineering plans for this project in coordination with the County of Orange and the Coastal Conservancy. Construction is expected to begin in the federal fiscal year 2004.
24. **Big Canyon Creek Restoration Plan** – At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal

Conservancy will consider a \$167,000 grant to the Community Conservancy International for a restoration plan at Big Canyon, adjacent to Upper Newport Bay. The project is expected to take approximately one year to complete.

25. **Talbert Marsh Tidal Channel Enhancement Design** – At its September 26, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy approved a grant to the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy to prepare a long-term management plan for Talbert Marsh which will evaluate sedimentation impacts and the possible need for modifications to the tidal channels.
26. **Huntington Beach Acquisitions** – The Coastal Conservancy, in partnership with the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, is negotiating for over 60 acres of property at the Huntington Beach wetlands. A draft appraisal has been prepared for two parcels and an updated appraisal for a third parcel is expected to begin in January 2003. The Conservancy anticipates making an offer for a portion of the wetlands in Fall 2002.
27. **Bolsa Chica Wetlands Restoration** – Final design and engineering plans are being prepared for the project. Project permitting is also underway.
28. **Bryant Acquisition (Los Cerritos)** – The Trust for Public Land is taking the lead on the negotiations for acquisition of the Bryant Ranch. The property appraisal is complete.
29. **Bixby Ranch Company Acquisition (Los Cerritos)** – The Trust for Public Land is taking the lead on the negotiations for acquisition of the Bixby Ranch. There are several significant issues that need to be resolved.
30. **Los Cerritos Wetlands Conceptual Restoration Plan** – The Coastal Conservancy has begun meeting with interested agencies to develop a scope of work for preparing a conceptual restoration plan for the entire Los Cerritos wetland system. The Conservancy does not anticipate expending significant funds on the restoration plan until acquisition one or more of the properties is complete.
31. **Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project** – Plans to modify a County storm drain that empties into Colorado Lagoon could potentially conflict with the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Project. Coastal Conservancy staff are coordinating with Los Angeles County and the City of Long Beach to resolve this potential conflict.
32. **Lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Habitat Needs Assessment** – The Coastal Conservancy has circulated a scope of work for this study to interested agencies, including the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). The Conservancy is working with the RMC and the Los Angeles/San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council to identify an appropriate regional forum to provide guidance on this project.
33. **DeForest Wetlands Restoration Preliminary Plan** – This project is on hold pending completion of a study by the Water Replenishment District on the feasibility of using DeForest as a groundwater recharge basin. Preliminary data indicates that injection wells could be used in the basin which would be compatible with wetlands restoration. The Conservancy is also waiting for decisions by CalTrans and the Los Angeles County Public Works Department that could affect use of the basin. These issues should be resolved by

early 2003, at which time a course of action for continued project planning will be developed.

34. **Upper Malibu Creek Feasibility Study (Rindge Dam)** – The Feasibility Study is underway and is scheduled for completion in Spring 2004. The current budget for the local cost-share does not include WRP. However, the budget is being revised to reflect State Parks' available funding, and it is expected that up to \$400,000 of WRP funds will be needed in early 2003.
35. **Solstice Creek Steelhead Enhancement Design Plans** – CalTrans has determined that its modification of the Highway 1 culvert to facilitate fish passage will cost significantly more than originally estimated. CalTrans does not have sufficient funds to complete the project at this time. The Highway 1 culvert is the first significant barrier to fish passage on Solstice Creek and must be modified before any upstream barrier-removal projects can benefit steelhead. Therefore, the Conservancy is considering re-directing some funds from the upstream project to the Highway 1 project. A plan of action is currently under development by the Conservancy, National Parks Service, and CalTrans.
36. **Lower Conejo Creek Acquisition** – The Conservancy has made an offer to the landowner for the Lower Conejo Creek property and is waiting for a response.
37. **Ormond Beach Wetlands Acquisition** – The Coastal Conservancy is negotiating with several landowners in the Ormond Beach area, including the City of Oxnard for acquisition of properties at the Ormond Beach wetlands.
38. **Santa Clara River Parkway Acquisitions** – Approximately 670 acres have been acquired along 4 miles of the river. Negotiations for additional acquisitions are ongoing.
39. **Matilija Dam Feasibility Study** – The Feasibility Study is underway and is scheduled for completion at the end of 2004.
40. **Ventura River Arundo Removal Project** – The County Flood Control District has decided to prepare an environmental review document for Arundo removal from the entire watershed. Implementation of the demonstration removal project is on hold until the review is complete. This review is scheduled to be complete in Summer 2003. The Coastal Conservancy, in partnership with the Ventura County Arundo Task Force sponsored an Arundo removal workshop in Ventura in August 2002.
41. **Carpinteria Salt Marsh, Basin 1 Enhancement** – The enhancement plan is complete. CEQA documents are in preparation. The project will be ready for implementation in early 2003, provided sufficient funding can be secured.
42. **Mission Creek Museum Area Restoration Plan** – At its September 26, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy approved a grant of \$110,000 to Community Environmental Council for design plans for the Mission Creek project. This project should be complete by September 2003.
43. **Santa Barbara Urban Streams and Wetlands Restoration Project** – Project is underway and should be complete at the end of 2003.

44. **Summerland/Greenwell Preserve Restoration** – Project implementation should be complete by late 2002.
45. **Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Experiment** – In August 2002, staff from the Santa Barbara airport met with representatives of USDA Wildlife Services, who serve as advisors to the FAA on bird-strike issues. Wildlife Services expressed strong support for the experimental design and will recommend that the FAA allow the study to proceed. At its October 31, 2002 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy will consider a \$148,000 grant to the City of Santa Barbara for preparing the final design plans for the Tidal Restoration Experiment.
46. **Devereux Slough/Ellwood Mesa Regional Plan** – The draft plan has been released to the public for review. The project is now on hold until the newly incorporated City of Goleta has evaluated the plan.
47. **WRP Small Grants Program** – The 2002-2003 cycle of the WRP Small Grants Program is underway. The SGP manager is currently working with program grantees to finalize the scopes of work and budgets for the selected projects.

1. **Otay Mesa Vernal Pools Acquisition** – The WRP Work Plan recommends contributing about 10 percent of the funding for this acquisition. The County of San Diego is identifying additional funding sources to complete the project.
2. Escondido Creek Watershed Restoration Action Strategy
3. Escondido Creek Restoration - Bumann Site
4. Batiquitos Lagoon Saxony Property Acquisition
5. Batiquitos Lagoon Exotics Removal and Revegetation
6. Aliso Creek Dairy Fork Biofiltration Basin
7. **Wood Canyon Stream Stabilization and Restoration** – The ACOE's preliminary draft Baseline Conditions Report was completed in January 2002. The ACOE expects to begin the final design and construction phase in December 2002. WRP funding will not be needed until that time.
8. Serrano Creek Exotics Removal
9. East Garden Grove Wintersburg Channel Treatment Wetland
10. Coyote Creek Watershed Plan
11. Lower Los Angeles River Acquisitions
12. Big Tujunga Wash Revegetation and Restoration
13. Ballona Wetlands Acquisition
14. Cross Creek Road Fish Passage
15. Cold Creek Riparian Acquisitions, Part 2
16. La Sierra Riparian Acquisition
17. UCSB Campus Lagoon Enhancements